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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: YASIN ABU BAKR RELEASED ON BAIL IN T&T

Ref: Port of Spain 00727

¶1. Yasin Abu Bakr, head of the Jamaat Al-Muslimeen (JAM) group responsible for the failed 1990 coup attempt, received bail on July 14. Bakr, the first person to be charged under T&T's anti-terrorism statute, had been denied bail on two previous attempts due to the seriousness of the charges. The third time proved a charm as Bakr finally secured TT\$400,000 (US\$66667) bail and an apology from the court. Presiding Judge Herbert Volney, said, "Every day spent in prison, when you are presumed innocent, is really an injustice." Amid cheers of "Allah -a- Akbar" from supporters in the courtroom, Bakr left the courthouse and headed back to his JAM compound. His trial is expected to resume in early November.

¶2. In response to Bakr's release, the press has refocused on his controversial affidavit in which he alleges that Prime Minister Patrick Manning cut a deal with the JAM to ensure that the People's National Movement won the 2001 elections (reftel). Bakr argues that since the JAM upheld its end of the bargain, the State make good on the deal and not seek to regain damages from the 1990 coup attempt. Attorney General John Jeremie is slated to appear in court soon to argue that the affidavit should be thrown out.

SWEENEY